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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

May 7, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Bobbi Jo Kenyon, 2012-2013 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

In Grand Rapids - Ottawa Hills High School

Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) met and planned the agenda for our yearly retreat where we reflect on the year, formulate our goals for next year, and plan our summer staff professional development. We also received information that our team will be attending the Model School Conference in Washington, D.C. in June where we will have an opportunity to observe and discuss how other schools have worked through initiatives to increase and sustain student achievement. Over 25 schools will be sharing innovative practices for Common Core Success, strategies for increasing literacy, mathematics, technology and career readiness, and approaches to meeting increased expectations in times of declining resources. The ILT plans to bring new ideas and strategies that support our School Improvement Plan back to students and staff.

We invited each department at our school to analyze this year's School Improvement Plan (SIP) and give feedback as to what strategies worked, what didn't work, and what should be incorporated into the SIP for next year to keep us moving forward. Having staff input is essential for buy in and maintaining accountability at a school. Our ILT will be meeting next month to work on the SIP by taking the feedback from teachers and data from student achievement to formulate our plan for next year.

Our MI Champions team, which I am a part of, attended the annual Michigan Association of Computer Use for Learning (MACUL) in Detroit. This is one of my favorite yearly conferences as the focus is on teachers sharing how they use technology in their classroom to support student learning and success. As part of the MI Champions, we each developed two in-depth lesson plans that incorporated

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technology that will be placed on iTunes University for other teachers to use. The database is now a collection of five years for this program and is a great resource for teachers. This is the last year of the program due to the grant running out, and it will be missed! At the conference, I attended nine different sessions and learned a plethora of great strategies and ideas that I plan to use in my classroom. One of my favorite is using gaming to help students learn. I love to create different games and competitions in my classroom; however, I did not realize the wide range of free web-based games that are available and can be tweaked to different teacher needs. I am going to utilize these during my next unit, and I know that it will not only help with student engagement, but will facilitate the studying and understanding of concepts in a fun way.

Principal Lewis sent an email to our staff thanking them for their dedication and commitment to the implementation of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) and for the result of the audit in our school which showed the following: a great walk-through, good documentation by all staff, the visible pattern of Professional Development that could be followed since last September, that the process we have implemented looks sustainable, and that our internal capacity was a true strength. The audit team's closing comment was that our school could be used as a model at both state and federal levels. This is testimony to the true dedication of the great staff and leaders at our school.

Our District

Our district held its bimonthly department meetings. Our science Professional Learning Community (PLC) included high school, middle school, and elementary school teachers in our surrounding area. Our focus was on critical reading and ways to improve literacy in science. We also talked about the impact of the Next Generation Science Standards and how this change was going to be brought about throughout the next few years in our district.

A Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Spring Carnival is being planned in May at each of our high schools where parents can learn about exciting new school choices in the district, athletic changes, after school programs, etc. Events like these are a great way to connect with families in the area and show what GRPS has to offer them.

Two students from GRPS were selected for the Gates Millennium Scholarship. This program selects 1,000 talented students each year to receive a "good-through graduation" scholarship to use at any college of their choice up to \$350,000. The goal is to promote academic excellence and to provide an opportunity for outstanding minority students in need of financial assistance to help reach their highest potential. One winning student is from Ottawa Hills whom I have had the privilege of knowing. She is very a deserving young woman!

In My Classroom

It is definitely hard to be out of the classroom, as every teacher knows, and this year has been a challenge being out for my Teacher of the Year duties such as my week in Washington, D.C. To be better connected with my classes when I am gone, I have used technology.

I established a classroom twitter account and my students "followed" it. Through this, I updated my students on what I was doing, sent pictures of Washington D.C., and even posted trivia questions for them to answer. They could also tweet me any questions they had about their work. I also screen-casted a few directions about assignments so the substitute could play it at school for students to better understand what to do. I found this worked out really well, and it helps me and my students stay connected.

I also developed class jobs for the students. During each hour every day when I am gone, a job slip for class host, class leader, class tweeter, and class cleaner is assigned. The host will help the substitute hand out and collect papers, take attendance, answer the phone, and assist in anything the sub needs. The class leader gives directions to the class, walks around to assist other students, helps keep the class on track, and plays any video directions I left. The tweeter will send me a tweet to let me know how the class went that hour and any questions students may have. The class cleaner helps pick up after each class and have everything set up for the next hour. I have found this procedure works really well and has definitely helped the substitute teachers. It also gives students more responsibility when I am gone and holds them accountable.

In the future, I would like to get Skype set up to be able to talk to my class when I am not there and to set up study groups in the evening, such as before tests. I think technology is such a wonderful way to keep that connection with students, and this year I have found new and productive ways to use it when I am out for my Teacher of the Year duties.

As Michigan Teacher of the Year

I was invited to present at Kappa Delta Pi's "I am a Teacher" Expo at Michigan State University. I was the keynote speaker and presented my story and background, and then I told about the five things that I believe all teachers must do to be successful. I love presenting to pre-service teachers and there was a wide range of students in education from only a couple years in the program to those who were student teaching. What a great day for feeling passionate about teaching and learning! I was honored to be asked to speak and hope that I touched everyone in some way with my passion for what I do.

My favorite part was at the end of the day when several students came to talk to me. I love meeting education students and hearing their story. The comment that made me smile the most was from two girls who said they wanted to teach in the inner city, but were being discouraged by others to go in this direction. After hearing my presentation and seeing my passion for teaching in the urban schools, they had renewed hope in their decision and sounded like they wanted to pursue this. How great! The inner city schools need teachers like them with hearts in the right place. I want all educators to know how special a person it takes to teach and how much dedication it takes to be on this career path. As educators, may we always stand up, be proud, and say "I AM a teacher!"

I presented a keynote address at the Teacher Leadership group at the Kent Intermediate School District. Teacher leadership is definitely a passionate topic for me as I share my experience from moving out of only influencing my own classroom, to a larger role in my school. I shared four major initiatives that our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) implemented in our school over the past few years: our Weekly Formative Assessment plan, Instructional Template, Professional Developing Planning, and Instructional Rounds practice. I received great feedback and the teachers were extremely excited to implement some of these ideas in their schools.

The video that Education First did with me last month was released. It turned out great! It was wonderful to work with Colleen Peirce as she dedicates her time and talent to highlighting positive educational stories throughout the state and nation. This video can be seen on my website: www.bobbijokenyon.com under "Portfolio".

The highlight this month for me was definitely my trip to Washington, D.C. with the National Teacher of the Year Program. I cannot begin to explain all the wonderful experiences that I had! To share a few: I learned about the RESPECT initiative at the U.S. Department of Education; met Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education; visited the Smithsonian Institution and learned about their new initiatives; toured the Natural History Museum behind the scenes; went to the SMART Board Technology Center to learn how to utilize this technology in our classrooms; toured the Capitol; and attended a ceremony in the Rose Garden where I met President Obama!